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THE GIFT
OF
TONGUES

C. JENNER

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THE
GIFT OF TONGUES:

A
P O E M.

BY
CHARLES JENNER, M.A.

C A M B R I D G E,

Printed by J. ARCHDEACON Printer to the UNIVERSITY;

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M.DCC.LXVII.

A Clause of Mr. SEATON's Will,

Dated OCT. 8. 1738.

I Give my Kissingbury Estate to the University of Cambridge for ever: the Rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as he the Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare-Hall, and the Greek Professor for the time being, or any two of them shall agree. Which three persons aforesaid shall give out a Subject, which Subject shall for the first Year be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding Years, till the Subject is exhausted; and afterwards the Subject shall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatsoever else may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Master of Clare-Hall, and Greek Professor, to be most conducive to the Honour of the Supreme Being and Recommendation of Virtue. And they shall yearly dispose of the Rent of the above Estate to that Master of Arts, whose Poem on the Subject given shall be best approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed; the expence of which shall be deducted out of the product of the Estate, and the residue given as a reward for the Composer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verses.

WE the underwritten, do assign Mr. SEATON's Reward to CHARLES JENNER, M.A. for his Poem on *The Gift of Tongues*; and direct the said Poem to be printed, according to the tenor of the Will.

October 28, 1767.

John Smith, Vice-Chancellor.
P. S. Goddard, Master of Clare-Hall.
M. Lort, Greek Professor.

G I F T O F T O N G U E S .

GOD's wond'rous pow'r, on That great day reveal'd
When from on high the Sacred Influence fell
Knowledge and light surpassing human lore
Diffusing in it's course, vent'rous I sing.
O for one transient gleam from that pure fount
Of light celestial, whose all-pow'rful rays
Instant dispell'd the mists of Ignorance,
Inform'd the mind, and urg'd the willing tongue!
O for one spark of that transcendant Fire,
Which shed it's rapid influence through the Soul,
Kindling at once in the astonish'd mind
The sacred flame of heav'n-directed Zeal,
In strains pour'd forth of Wisdom heaven-taught,
Which in conception, to perfection sprang,
Mocking the tedious steps of human Wit!

4 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

Too vain that wish.—But thou O Spirit pure
Who deign’st to guide the wayward heart of man,
When conscious weakness claims thy aid benign,
Thou from whose eyes the palpable obscure
Nought hides, who mark’st my inmost Soul,
And check’st with care paternal ev’ry ill,
Suggesting kindly pure and holy thoughts,
Frame thou my mind; Dispose my humble heart
To feel thy goodness and adore thy might;
Grant me, with faith to read thy wond’rous works,
To hear with joy, to tell with gratitude;
Grant me, at humble distance, to revere
Those acts of pow’r, I know not how to scan;
Grant me, with scorn to view the Sceptic’s pride
Who dares to tread the dark, meand’ring maze,
And strive with mortal ken, (how short! how dim!)
To trace the steps of dread Omnipotence;
Grant me, with humble yet exulting mind,
In all thy wond’rous works to mark the end,
Nor rashly strive to comprehend the means;
To view, with rev’rent awe, the mighty Cause,
And feel with gratitude the blest’d Effect;

Grant

Grant me, in this meek, sober frame of mind,
To view thy goodness, and to sing thy praise;
So shall my lays, though rude, attention claim,
Nor useless sink in cold oblivion's wave;
Warm from the heart they bear intrinsic worth,
And conscience shall bear witness to their truth.

'Twas on that day, that memorable day
When erst the Prophet of the favour'd seed
From Israel sprung, high-honour'd Moses held
With trembling awe, converse with God himself;
'Twas on that day, when round the sacred mount
The rapid light'nings shot their livid glance,
Flashing a larger and a larger curve,
Whilst the dread Thunder, mutt'ring from afar,
With fullen murmur deep'ning in it's course,
Burst ratt'ling all around in discord wild,
When, midst the horror of the awful scene,
The holy Prophet learn'd those high behests
By which to lead his sacred flock, and shew
Types of a purer plan in days to come;
On that same day, the still more sacred flock

6 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:
Of Christ, who inly mourn'd his recent loss,
Stol'n from the clamours of the impious croud
In thought pursu'd his steps to Heav'n, and cheer'd
Each others griefs with thoughts of bliss to come.

Not hopeless did they grieve; for o'er the Soul
His last bequest had shed a gleam of Joy;
“A comforter to come” restrain'd their tears,
A stedfast faith suppress'd the rising sigh,
And expectation rais'd their downcast Eyes.
Nor vain their hope; for now with sudden burst
A rushing Noise through all the sacred Band
Silence profound and fix'd attention claim'd,
A chilling terror crept through ev'ry heart,
Mute was each tongue, and pale was ev'ry face:
The rough roar ceas'd; when, borne on fiery wings,
The dazzling Emanation from above
In brightest vision round each sacred head
Diffus'd it's vivid beams; mysterious light!
That rushed impetuous through th' awaking mind,
Whilst new Ideas fill'd the passive Soul,
Fast crowding in with sweetest violence.

’Twas

'Twas then amaz'd they caught the glorious flame,
Spontaneous flow'd their all-persuasive words,
Warm from the heart, and to the heart address'd
Deep sunk their force in ev'ry captiv'd ear.

O see the crowd, pressing with eager steps
To catch the flowing periods as they fall;
See how, with wond'ring rapture, they devour
The pleasing accents of their native tongue;
See how, with eyes uplifted, they advance,
With out-stretch'd hands and smiles of social love
To greet the part'ners of their native Soil;
O catch the varying transports in their looks,
In awful wonder see each passion lost,
When ev'ry Nation urg'd an equal claim.
Fond men forbear; and know, the voice of Truth
By weak restraints of Language unconfin'd
Flows, independent, from that radiant shrine
From whence the day-spring draws her glitt'ring store
To shine on all with undistinguish'd ray,
And scatter dazzling light on ev'ry clime.

Immortal

8 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

Immortal Truth! by Inspiration taught,
Thou spurn'st the servile chains of human art;
In native majesty array'd, thou shed'st
Thy radiant beams through all this vale below;
Thy piercing voice resounds through distant climes,
By all distinguish'd, and by all ador'd.
Thou sat'st enthron'd above yon azure vault
And mock'dst the tedious toil of human wit,
What time at Babel's hapless tow'r they strove
To rescue meaning from the load of sounds,
And give precision to the voice confus'd,
Restoring Heav'n's most pleasing gift to Man.

Thee neither wind nor wave can circumscribe,
Wide o'er where Ocean spreads his ample bed
Thou fliest at large, to visit ev'ry shore,
And pour thy sacred voice in ev'ry heart
In language universal. What avail
To thy all-piercing eye, and tongue heav'n-taught
The nice distinctions of the critic art,
The foolish pride of letter'd pedantry,
Rising, by slow degrees and labour'd care,

From

From the first lisp, which on the infant tongue
Hangs with uncertain cadence, to the height
Of Learning's utmost pow'r? With scorn thou view'st
The erring paths of Science, falsely call'd;
Tracing her flow steps from her Eastern home
Whence first, in clouded majesty, she beam'd
A transient glance, and tempted the pursuit,
Thou mark'st her progress from the rapid Nile,
Where Thebes receiv'd her at her hundred gates,
And seest her roll her ever-wand'ring way
To milder climes, when Greece with open arms
Receiv'd her credulous; Old Orpheus then
And Linus sung their fabled lays, and spread
A lengthen'd train of philosophic lies.
Mocking thou view'st the pride of human wit,
Whilst Athens self, fair Science' fav'rite seat,
And Rome Imperial, vers'd in ev'ry lore,
Successless toil to bring thee forth to view.
Thou seest unnumber'd Systems rise and fall;
And ev'ry learned age bring new deceits;
Whilst tow'ring Pride still lifts her ready hand
To crush the fond delusion of the day,

10 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

And instant rear a stronger in it's place.
But O! this blindness may not ever be,
And vague Opinion, with usurping hand,
Bright Wisdom's sceptre may not ever wield;
Thou speak'st Immortal Truth! beneath each pole
The trembling Earth acknowledges thy voice;
Pride catches quick the mortifying sound,
Far, far aloof flies ev'ry golden dream
And all is blindfold Error and distress.
O! 'twas That potent voice, whose magic pow'r
Burst through the organs of the sacred Band,
What time O Salem midst thy hallow'd walls
The mingled crowd from many a distant realm
In fix'd attention hung upon their words,
Which, with conviction fraught, flow'd unrestrain'd,
Though, skill'd alone in Virtue's sacred lore,
They never had employ'd life's precious hours
In learning's paths; without proud Science wife.

By weakest ministers th' Almighty thus
Makes known his sacred will, and shews his pow'r:
By Him inspir'd they speak with urgent tongue

Autho-

Authoritative, whilst th' illumin'd breast
Heaves with unwonted strength; High as their theme
Their great conceptions rise in rapt'rous flow,
As quick the ready organs catch the thought,
And, in such strains as Science could not teach,
Bear it, in all it's radiance, to the Heart;
The list'ning throng there feel it's blest'd effect,
And deep conviction glows in ev'ry breast.

See ev'ry crime which stains the human mind
At their strong bidding take it's rapid flight:
Delusion's dreams no more infect the Soul,
High-boasting Pride, fierce Wrath, impetuous Lust,
And Avarice swelling with hydropic thirst,
Fade, like unwholesome dews before the Sun:
They fade to rise no more; for see a band
Of radiant Virtues seize their late abode,
And stamp the mansion with the seal of Truth.
There heav'nly Knowledge shines in glitt'ring pride,
And Patience sits, with meek submissive smile
Disarming stern Oppression; Justice there
Erects her rigid test of right and wrong;

12 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

And there, with God's own armour all-begirt,
 Stands Fortitude, erect in Christian strength;
 There Temp'rance stands, with ever-watchful Eye,
 To curb the Passions with a steady rein;
 And Candour there her golden rule displays
 To act by others as thy heart must wish
 They, in like circumstance, should act by thee;
 But chiefly there, in ever-fixed seat,
 Sits heav'n-born Charity; her eagle Eye
 Thrown o'er the wide expanse of Nature's works,
 Where, nobly scorning ev'ry meaner tie,
 She deems all human ills her own, and sighs
 If ought of mis'ry dwell beneath the Sun.
 With such bright guests the Christian mind is stor'd
 Pledges of truest Knowledge, Joy, and Peace:
 These to make known became the sacred task
 By Heav'n impos'd upon the chosen band;
 Thrice happy they to such high office call'd
 The blessed ministers of God's high will!
 For them the fulness of his might is shewn
 O'erleaping the strong bounds of Nature's law;
 Grim Death for them contracts his hasty stride,

And

And checks his Dart ev'n in the act to strike;
His horrid messengers Disease and Pain
Loose their remorseless grasp unwillingly,
And leave their prey to ease and thankfulness;
For them bright Wisdom opens all her stores,
Her golden treasures spreading to their view,
Whilst Inspiration's all-enliv'ning light
Hangs hov'ring o'er their heads in glitt'ring blaze;
Warm'd by the ray, they pour the sacred strain
In Eloquence seraphic; Truths divine,
For ever register'd in Heav'n's high page,
Flow from their lips, and glow within their breasts;
Amaz'd they feel the sacred extacy,
With heav'nly rapture, thrill in ev'ry nerve;
Whilst in their flowing words, with Wisdom fraught.
Celestial, shines the heav'nly Spirit pure.
This is no fancy'd pow'r, no idle dream,
No flatt'ring scheme by heated Fancy form'd,
The genuine Influence fills each raptur'd Soul,
And beams in ev'ry eye conspicuous.

Far other flame the vain Enthusiast feels

When,

14 THE GIFT OF TONGUES:

When, Reason by delusive Fancy led
In sad captivity, the Thoughts confus'd
Rush on his mind in dark and doubtful sense,
His mind a chaos of blind zeal, that spurns
Th' unerring clue which mild Discretion lends.
Perchance the clashing images strike out
Some languid ray of casual light; how soon
The weak and momentary glance is lost
Beneath a load of wild obscurity.
Much does he labour with some weighty thought,
Of Faith, of Grace, of Heav'n, perchance of Hell,
But all in vain he draws the thread confus'd
To tedious length, the end eludes his search,
And leaves him wrapt in wild perplexity
Recoiling still on the same beaten track.
Thus wayward Fancy with her vagrant blaze
Misleads the eye of Ignorance; mean while
In vain the steady lamp of Reason burns
The sure and sober guide to Truth's retreat.
But ah! consider well ye self-inspir'd,
Ere Fancy, drooping on the bed of Death,
Leaves ye forlorn to seek for Reason's aid,

Consider

Consider well, are these the genuine marks
Of heav'nly Inspiration? Was it thus
In wild extatic rants and dubious phrase,
In doctrines intricate and terms perplex'd
The simple messengers of Jesus spake?
O search and see, were not their doctrines pure,
And in such plain and modest phrase express'd.
As best befits Instruction's wholesome plan?
Mighty to save, they sought no other pow'r,
No meed, but that which conscious Virtue feels.
When she conducts some hapless wand'rer back
To paths, without her aid, for ever lost.
If such your heav'nly aim, your lives unblam'd
Will give, like theirs, an earnest of your truth;
If, daily train'd to ev'ry virtuous act,
You tread the steps the blessed Jesus trod
Through the streight path, the way of holiness,
Then may ye lead your flocks to his abode;
But O beware! think not the heav'nly guest
Can fix his residence with ought impure;
Think not the heart which Pride or Int'rest guides
Can ever be the seat of heav'nly grace;

16 THE GIFT OF TONGUES, &c.

If yet the holy Spirit deigns to dwell
In earthly domes, 'tis not in those defil'd
With Pride, with Fraud, with Rapine, or with Lust;
Midst the rough foliage of the thorny brake
The clust'ring Grape not blushes, and the Fig
Decks not the prick'ly Thistle's barren stalk,
Ev'n thus shall all be measur'd by their fruits;
So spake the living Oracle of truth:
O never, never lose this sacred guide,
By ev'ry blast of doctrine borne away,
But gazing ever on the Gospel light,
That endless source of evidence and truth,
Prove ev'ry doctrine by that golden rule,
And "try the Spirits if they be of God."

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